Recruitment Agency Champions Mental Health of Contract Workforce following Tragic Loss

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd
Monday, 22 October 2018

A recruitment consultancy which specialises in placing contingent workers is training its employees in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA (https://mhfaengland.org/)) – and urging other companies to do the same – after recognising a dangerous gap in responsibility for this vulnerable section of the workforce.

The decision to ensure staff at The Works Recruitment (https://theworksrec.co.uk/) were Certified Mental Health First Aiders was spearheaded by Managing Director, Craig Burton, who is a Trustee of the Board of the Leeds Community Foundation, which recently brought in HRH the Duke of Sussex (https://www.royal.uk/prince-harry-gives-speech-mental-health-leeds-community-foundation) to speak on the issue.

According to a survey (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-45470517) of 44,000 people carried out by the mental health charity, Mind, poor mental health affects half of all employees. However, a recent poll (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44103085) by the Institute of Directors found fewer than one in five firms offer mental health training for managers. Contract workers are thought to be most at risk of falling through the cracks amid uncertainty around who is responsible for the occupational health of these individuals.

The Works Recruitment has been championing mental health among the temporary workforce since 2017 following the tragic death of one of the firm's contract workers who took their own life. The firm is currently working in collaboration with the Mental Health First Aid Campaign (https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/news/-government-campaign-one-million-launches/), Thriving Minds (https://www.thrivingmindsbehavioralhealth.com/) and Thrive Law (https://www.thrivelaw.co.uk/) on this agenda and is lobbying government to make it mandatory for any business employing over 30 people to have a designated Mental Health First Aider.

Reflecting on the initiative, Craig Burton, Managing Director at The Works Recruitment, commented:

"According to Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England (https://mhfaengland.org/organisations/workplace/), poor mental health costs UK employers £34.9 billion each year when sickness-absence, reduced productivity and staff turnover are taken into account. However, as our own tragic experience has taught us, the cost of not identifying individuals who may need support is actually much higher.

"For too long there has been a culture of fear and silence around mental health, and while work may not directly impact an individual's emotional state, you can't leave mental health issues at home. I can't help thinking that if a member of my team - or the client's team – had been trained in Mental Health First Aid, we may have been able to at least identify there was an issue with the young father who took his own life, and perhaps even prevent the devastating situation.

"When HRH Prince Harry spoke to the Leeds Community Foundation, he urged us to redouble our efforts in overcoming this issue – and that's exactly what we intend to do. In our experience, nobody seems to

be taking responsibility for the mental health and wellbeing of temporary workers, who don't even have the benefit of established networks in the workplace which can be a lifeline for those in turmoil. This is why we're campaigning to encourage other firms who recruit and manage temporary workforces to join us and endorse Mental Health First Aid in their business. We have a moral obligation to look out for those who are overlooked by others – and together we can make a difference."

- Ends

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